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ABSTRACT

Assessment use is a cornerstone of successful counseling. Information from assessments is used for making several important therapeutic decisions, requiring the counselor to have information about assessment devices and approaches. Tests are being published at a remarkable rate; it is a challenge for counselors to stay well informed. Products and programs from the Buros Institute of Mental Measurements serve test information needs of counselors and therapists. The "Mental Measurement Yearbook" and "Test in Print" series contain information about availability, quality, and utility of assessment devices. Counselors can identify tests potentially appropriate for their clinical practice and stay up-to-date on assessment of psychological constructs and educational outcomes through use of these volumes. In addition, the Institute sponsors topical symposia and volumes targeted at specific audiences; these can provide cutting edge assessment information to counselors and therapists. The counseling process is multifaceted and complex. Tests and other specific assessment approaches are useful assisting counselors in making appropriate clinical decisions; the Buros Institute's mission is to support well-informed assessment decisions. (JBJ)

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Using Buros Institute of Mental Measurements Materials in Counseling and Therapy

by Barbara S. Plake and Jane Close Conoley

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON Counseling And Student Services

ERIC DIGEST

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Barbara S. Plake and Jane Close Conoley

Overview

Assessment use is a cornerstone of successful counseling. Information from assessments is used for making initial diagnostic decisions, to assess client readiness for clinical interventions, for monitoring progress during the counseling process, and for assessing therapeutic outcomes at the conclusion of the counseling program. Therefore, counselors' needs for information about assessment devices and approaches are very high. Tests are being published at a remarkable rate; it is a challenge for the practicing counselor to stay well informed about new approaches and revisions of well known tests (APA, 1990; Rudner and Dorko, 1989).

Buros Institute of Mental Measurements

Established over 50 years ago by Oscar K. Buros, the mission of the Buros Institute is to improve tests and testing practices by providing candidly critical reviews of instruments. The Institute fulfills this mission, in part, by publishing several reference works that contain descriptive and quality information about commercially available tests. In addition, the Institute publishes a topical series and sponsors symposia on specific assessment areas. Through access to products and programs of the Buros Institute, counselors can make more informed assessment selection decisions and stay current with assessment practices in the field.

Mental Measurements Yearbook and Tests in Print Series

The Mental Measurements Yearbook (MMY) and *Test in Print (TIP)* Series serve as companion resources for locating and evaluating commercially available tests. The *MMY* is hierarchically organized. Each new volume contains information about new or revised tests made available since the last publication. *TIP*, on the other hand, is comprehensive, providing descriptive information about currently available tests. In addition, *TIP* is a cumulative index to test information in the *MMY* series.

The Mental Measurements Yearbook contains descriptive information about tests, including test author, publisher, publication date (including dates of revisions), purpose of the test, categorization of the test, target populations/age ranges, price lists, reported scores, and availability information for users' documents such as manuals. For most tests, evaluations of the quality and utility follow descriptive information. Typically, two independent reviewers prepare critical analyses. Another useful feature of the information in the *Mental Measurements Yearbook* is the accompanying listing of journal references associated with each test.

Uses of the MMY Series for Counseling Practices

Information contained in the *MMY* can aid counselors in many ways (Claiborn,1991; Plake, Conoley, Kramer and Murphy, 1991). By referencing the categorization system developed by the Institute, counselors can locate tests appropriate for their purpose. These categories indicate the test's general purpose, such as Achievement, Behavior Assessment, Developmental, Education, Fine Arts, Intelligence and Scholastic Aptitude, Mathematics, Multi-Aptitude Batteries, Neuropsychological, Personality, Reading, Science, Sensory-Motor, Social Studies, Speech and Hearing, and Vocations.

Tests can also be identified through the score index. If, for example, a counselor wants to assess client self-esteem, referencing the score index will yield tests that provide a self-esteem score. The descriptive and evaluative information for those particular tests in the *Yearbook* will assist the counselor to identify the possible assessment instruments best suited for the client characteristics and clinical purpose.

The critical evaluations prepared by independent expert reviewers also assist the counselor by providing thorough, thoughtful analyses of the quality and utility of the test. Not only are these reviews helpful in making informed decisions about the usefulness of the test for the particular situation, but they also communicate current thinking in the field about the construct the test is designed to assess. Therefore, the reviews serve a continuing education purpose for practicing counselors by assisting the counselor in keeping current with theory and assessment developments.

It is sometimes important for counselors to be able to articulate and defend their assessment choices to a variety of audiences. The descriptive and evaluative information about an instrument, prepared by experts in the field, can serve as a definitive reference that has been shown to be useful for legal purposes. Although not designed for litigation, these reviews are potentially useful in court hearings when questions pertaining to assessment selection are raised. In addition, these reviews can

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provide objective evidence for such purposes as quality assurance reports and evaluations or audits of counseling practices or programs.

Other Products and Programs from the Buros Institute

In addition to the *Mental Measurements Yearbook* and *Tests in Print Series*, the Institute sponsors other products and programs that are potentially valuable for counselors and therapists.

Buros-Nebraska Symposium and Series on Measurement and Testing. One notable program is the Buros-Nebraska Symposium on Measurement and Testing. At these symposia, key people in the field are invited to make presentations and to lead discussions on issues relevant to assessment. The Buros-Nebraska Symposium Series is approved by American Psychological Association as a sponsor of continuing education credits. Counselors can acquire APA-approved CEU's through attendance. The presentations are edited and produced into volumes that are published in the Buros-Nebraska Series on Measurement and Testing. Occasionally, additional chapters are included in the volumes in order to more fully represent the topical area. Two recent symposia are of particular relevance to counseling practice: Family Assessment and Multicultural Assessment.

Oscar K. Buros Library of Mental Measurements. Located at the University of Nebraska, the Oscar K. Buros Library of Mental Measurements is also a useful resource for counselors and therapists. Counselors can inspect tests and ascertain their appropriateness for particular clinical purposes before purchasing. The tests reviewed for the *MMY* and *TIP* Series are located in the Institute's Library and are available for public inspection. Tight restrictions are placed on access for secure tests and all copyright materials are protected from dissemination through strict policies and procedures. However, the library is a significant resource of tests useful for counseling purposes.

Electronic Access to Test Review Information. The Eleventh MMY was also produced as a CD-ROM, searchable both through the traditional indices and by search algorithms. This product also provides a comprehensive master index to the location of test information in the *Mental Measurements Yearbook* and *Test in Print Series*. The institute is investigating other options for providing electronic access to test information.

Buros Desk Reference (BDR) Series. A new product from the Institute, the BDR is targeted for the individual practitioner. Descriptive and evaluative information about tests most frequently used in particular fields is located in a single volume. The first product in this series, *Buros Desk Reference: Psychological Assessment in the Schools*, contains evaluative information for the over 100 tests most frequently used by school psychologists, counselors, and counseling psychologists.

Summary

Products and programs from the Buros Institutes of Mental Measurements serve test information needs of counselors and therapists. The *Mental Measurements Yearbook and Test in Print* Series contain information about availability, quality, and utility of assessment devices. Counselors can identify tests potentially appropriate for their clinical practice and stay up-to-date on assessment of psychological constructs and educational outcomes through use of these volumes. In addition, the Institute sponsors topical symposia and volumes targeted at specific audiences; these can provide cutting-edge assessment information to counselors and therapists. Test users can also inspect instruments on-site at the Buros Library of Mental Measurements.

The counseling process is multi-faceted and complex. Tests and other specific assessment approaches are useful in assisting counselors in making appropriate clinical decisions; the Buros Institute's mission is to support well-informed assessment decisions. The Institute's products and programs point counselors toward reliable, valid, state-of-the art measurement practice in efficient, effective ways. In this way the counselor's goal to serve the client is enhanced.

Further information about the Institute or any of the products mentioned in this digest is available by writing to the Buros Institute, 135 Bancroft Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588-0348.

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